

DCFS Weekly Update From the State Office

Friday, November 3, 2000

From My Perspective

By Ken Patterson

New Name for Cottonwood/Granite/Salt Lake Region

Move over Northern...the new region is now the biggest. With 376 FTE staff, the new single region in Salt Lake and Tooele counties will be known as the Salt Lake Valley Region. The first meeting of the region was held on Monday and the organization chart from Region Director through Community Service Manager is now available.

Big Surprises from the Past Week

First, a Dan Jones poll conducted for the Deseret News and KSL found that of all the election year issues, Utahns rated the care and treatment of foster children as third most important. Only public education and crime were ranked as more important issues. I think for the purposes of the poll it was necessary to lump some concepts together. I am assuming that when people rated "foster care" so high they were also demonstrating an awareness of adoption and CPS issues as well. I sensed that the media and many persons seeking public office were surprised by the rating and were scrambling to find a candidate that was actually making "foster care" a major part of their campaign.

It seems to me that the rating was a reflection of what gets talked about or what gets put before the public through the various media. The crime reports of assaults against children; the public information and advocacy campaigns of groups like Utah Children; the mixed bag of reporting on the accomplishments of DCFS; media attendance at DCFS Board meetings; and the ad campaigns and community presence of the Utah Foster Care Foundation all seemed to have combined to create a higher public awareness of the work we do.

Translating this rating into positive political action is another matter. But I think the rating will help all public officials (elected and otherwise) in focusing on "foster care" and related issues.

Second, I was invited to speak last Saturday at the "make a difference day" sponsored by the Golden Spike Chapter of the Utah Mentoring Network. The Mentoring Network had chosen a project of supporting foster children by creating "gift duffel bags" for children entering or transitioning into foster care. The Mentoring Network used last Saturday as a work session to finish the bags and then made a formal presentation to **Katy Larsen, Dallis Pierson**, and myself.

I am using the term "bags" loosely. The bags are actually sewn upholstery fabric donated by the Lay-Z-Boy recliner folks, so they are a durable array of patterns and colors. They have a corded drawstring closure at the top, so they

are very nice to put your stuff in. They are much better than the black garbage bags that so many of our foster children unfortunately travel with. By the way, you should see **Joe Lieker** (supervisor from the Clearfield office) thread a drawstring. He is a natural craftsman, bordering on becoming an artisan.

These bags are filled with books, toys, fleece blankets, decorative pillows, and hygiene items. The contents of each bag have been selected appropriate to age range and sex of the children. They have been completed and are being delivered to Northern Region offices along with other donated items for foster children and foster families. Here is the count of donated items to this project:

duffel bags	785
pillows	644
blankets	398
stuffed animals	687
toys	367
yarn balls	466
books	745
art supplies	302
bead geckos	517
bead gecko kits	572
hygiene kits	619

For those of you who are into detail, that's 6,102 items given to and for the foster children of the Northern Region. Many of them are one-of-a-kind, handcrafted items.

Clearly, the staff of the Northern Region, working in cooperation with community volunteers and the Utah Foster Care Foundation, helped people understand what it is like for a child to have to leave their home and how having some comforting essentials helps make the experience more bearable. And, the volunteers working on the project couldn't help but picture the children who would receive their gifts. I am sure they mentally pictured what the child might look like and be feeling as they received the gift. It was one of those community projects that spills out of its intended benefits and serves to sensitize everybody who works on it to the needs of abused and neglected children.

Hats off to **Pat Smith**, Prevention Specialist at Weber Human Services who serves as President of the Utah Mentoring Network, for creating this project and mobilizing the community effort to see it through.

Two years ago, the Moab office teamed up with a local Senior Center for a similar effort. It appears that this type of project can be replicated in other communities. I know some of you are thinking, "How can I get some of that loot from Northern for kids from my office?" I asked Northern Region Director **Katy Larsen** about this. She said that if you want some of their foster care

duffel bags you could go to their sharing coordinator **Helen Waite**. So, go to Helen Waite.

To Make Your Life Easier...Using SAFE Optimally

By Robert Lewis

Understanding these SCF policy-based rules in SAFE concerning progress summary, service plan, and risk assessment may help your peace of mind:

- To close an SCF case, you must have a termination progress summary finalized within 30 days of the case closure. If the child is returning home, you must also have a finalized risk assessment dated within 30 days of the case closure.
- For the first 45 days of an SCF case starting from the removal date, you can complete a court report, transfer, or termination progress summary without a finalized service plan. After 45 days, a finalized service plan must be in SAFE before any kind of progress summary may be created.
- In order to be able to finalize a service plan in an SCF case, the set-up wizard must be satisfied and a finalized social summary must exist.